Exam Season

Mann ki Baat with India's Youth

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Commitment to Democracy

My fellow citizens, my namaskar to all of you! 26th January, our Republic Day was celebrated with joy and enthusiasm in every nook and corner of the nation by all of us. The Constitution of India, the duties of citizens, the rights of citizens and our commitment to democracy – these in a way make Republic Day also a festival of 'sanskaars', which makes our future generations cognizant of democracy and their democratic responsibilities, and also imparts to them the culture, moral values and norms inherent in our democracy. But still in our country, the duties and rights of citizens are not being debated and discussed as intensively and extensively as it should be done. I hope that the amount of emphasis that is given to the rights at every level during most of the time, is also given to discussing duties of citizens in an emphatic manner. The rights and duties of the citizens constitute the railway track, on which the train of democracy in India can move ahead at a fast pace.

Homage to Father of the Nation

Tomorrow is 30th January, the death anniversary of our revered Bapu. All of us pay tributes to the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the motherland, by observing silence for 2 minutes at 11 am on 30th January. As a society, as a nation, the 2 minute tribute of silence on 30th January at 11 am, should become our instinctive nature. This 2 minutes silence is an expression of our collective resolve and reverence for the martyrs.

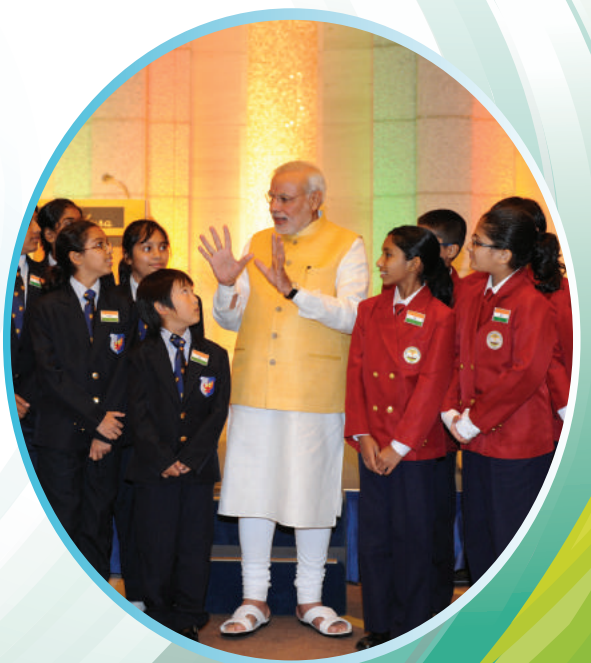
Honoring our Braveherats

In our country there is an innate respect for the military and the security forces. I congratulate and felicitate the young heroes and their families who were honoured with various gallantry awards on the eve of this Republic Day. There are various categories of these gallantry awards like Kirti Chakra, Shaurya Chakra, Vishisht Seva Medal and Param Vishisht Seva Medal. I want to urge the youth especially that since you are very active on social media, you can do one thing. Surf the Net to do some research on the valiant bravehearts, who have been bestowed with these honours, compose a few good lines about them and share these with your friends and companions. When we get to know the in depth details of their courage, bravery, valour in detail, we are filled with astonishment and pride and we also get inspired!

While we were all delighted with the tidings of enthusiasm and celebration of 26th January, at the same time, some of our army Jawans posted in Kashmir for the defense of the country, achieved martyrdom due to the avalanche. I respectfully pay my homage to all these brave soldiers, I bow to them.

Together with Young Friends in Exams

My young friends, you know very well that I regularly do my 'Mann Ki Baat'. January, February, March, April – all these are for every family, months of most severe test! Normally it is one or two children in a home due to appear at their exams, but the entire family feels the burden of it. This led me to believe that this is the right time for me to talk to my student friends, their guardians and their teachers, because for many years now, wherever I have gone, whomsoever I have met, examination appeared to be a great source of anxiety. Troubled families, harassed students, tense teachers – one sees a very strange psychological atmosphere prevailing in each home! And I have always felt that we should come out of this situation and, therefore, today I want to talk in some detail with my young friends. When I'd declared that I would talk on this topic, many teachers, guardians and students sent me their messages, questions, suggestions and also expressed their anguish and narrated their problems. And after going through all these outpourings, some ideas came to my mind, which I want to share with you today. I received a telephonic message from Srishti. You too listen to what Srishti has to say: –



Exams are not Pressure but Pleasure

> “Sir, I want to tell you that during exam time, very often in our homes, in the neighbourhood and in our society, a very terrifying and scary atmosphere pervades. This leads to a situation, where the students instead of feeling inspired feel tremendously down. So I just want to ask you this, can’t this be transformed into a pleasant atmosphere?”

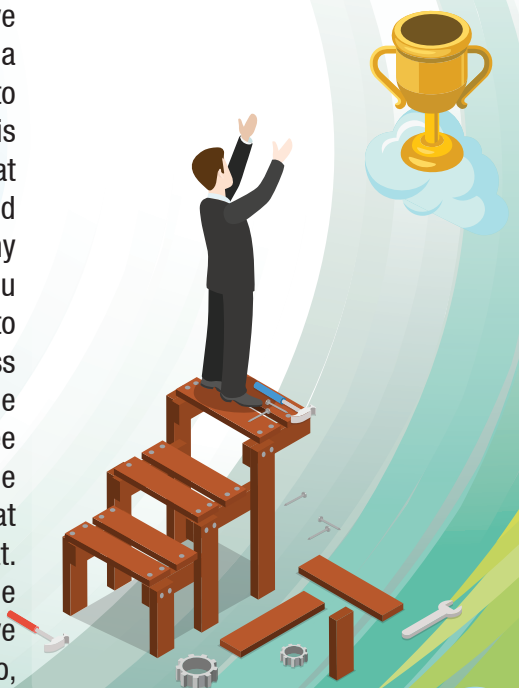
Well, the question has been posed by Srishti, but it is a question that must be there in the minds of all of you. Exams in themselves, should be a joyous occasion. After a year of hard work, one has the opportunity to display one’s capabilities, so this should be a festival of joy and enthusiasm. But there are very few people for whom there is pleasure in the exam; for most people exam means pressure! Now, it is up to you to decide whether you consider the exams pleasure or pressure. Those who will consider it a pleasure, will have achievements, while those who will consider exams a pressure, will have to repent. And therefore my opinion is that exams are like a festival and, hence, must be celebrated. And when there is a festive mood of celebration, the best within us comes out. The true realisation of the strength of a society also takes place during festivals. The best of everything finds a manifestation. Usually, we think of ourselves as a highly undisciplined lot, but if we just look at the arrangements made during the Kumbh Melas, which are celebrated for about 40–45 days, these despite being essentially make–shift arrangements, display the great discipline practised by people. This is the inherent strength of a festival. Hence, during examinations too, an atmosphere of festivity should be created in the whole family, amongst friends and around the neighbourhood.

And you will see for yourself, that the pressure will be converted into pleasure. The festive atmosphere will lead to a burden–free environment. And I especially urge the parents to create a festive atmosphere during these 3–4 months. All the family members have to work as a team and play with zeal their respective roles to make this festival of examination a success. You will witness for yourself the ensuing change. Actually from Kashmir to Kanyakumari and from Kutch to Kamrup and from Amreli to Arunachal Pradesh, these 3–4 months have examinations galore.

Smile More, Score More

It is the responsibility of each one of us that in our own ways, observing our respective traditions and in tune with our respective family surroundings, we should strive to transform every year these 3–4 months into a festival. And therefore I shall say to you 'Smile More Score More'! The more time these days you will spend being happy, the more will be the number of marks you will earn! Just try and see for yourselves! And you must have noticed that when you are happy, you are smiling, you become relaxed automatically, and when you relax instinctively, you're able to recollect very old things also quite effortlessly! A year ago, what the teacher had taught in the classroom, the whole scenario reappears in front of you. And you must know that the power of memory to recall is greatest when we are relaxed. If you are tense, then all the doors seem to be closed, nothing can enter from outside and nothing can come out from inside. The thought process comes to a standstill and that in itself becomes a burden. You must have seen for yourself that during the examinations also, you're able to recall everything else – the book, the chapter, the page number, whether what you want is there on the top of the page or at its bottom, you can recall everything but not the particular word you want to. But as soon as you finish the examination and exit from the examination hall, suddenly you recollect that very word. And you say to yourself – Yes, Man, that was the word I wanted! Why you could not remember the word inside the hall, was due to the pressure. And how you could recall it outside? It was the same you, nobody had now told you the answer! What happened was that whatever was inside, came out immediately and the reason was that you were now relaxed. And therefore the most effective medicine that exists for memory recall is relaxation. And it is by my own personal experience that I'm telling you that if you're under pressure then you forget even your own things but if you are relaxed, then you can't even imagine the kind of things you are able to remember, and these become extremely useful. It is not that you do not have the knowledge, it is not that you do not have the information, and it is not that you have not worked hard! But when there is tension, your knowledge, your wisdom, your information – all these buckle under and the tension rides over you. And therefore it is necessary to remember that 'a happy mind is the secret for a good mark sheet'!

Sometimes it also appears that we are not able to perceive examinations in a proper perspective. It seems to become a question of life and death. See, the exam you are going to appear at is the exam of what you have studied during this whole year. But it is not a test of your life. It is not a test of what kind of life have you lived, how is the life you are living now and what is the life you aspire to live. There must have been many occasions in your life, when, besides the examinations that you appeared at inside the classrooms with notebooks, you had to encounter and endure many tests and trials. And thus success and failure in life is not determined at all by how one has done at the examination; this is a burden from which you must free yourself. We all have before us the extremely inspiring example of our former President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. He appeared at the test for recruitment into the Air Force, and failed in that. Now suppose that this failure had caused him to become dejected, to concede defeat in his life, then would India have found such a great scientist and such a glorious President? No, never!



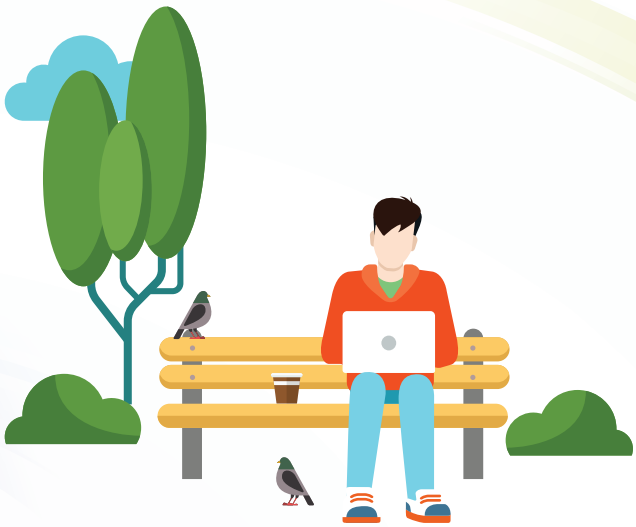
Compete with Self Not Others

One Richa Anand Ji has sent me this question: –

> “Today what I see as the biggest challenge facing the education is that it has come to focus solely on examinations. Marks have become all important. As a result, the competition has multiplied leading to a very high increase of stress in the students also. So I would like to know your views concerning the current direction of education and its future course.”

Although she herself has given the answer to her query, but Richa Ji wishes that I too must put forth my views on the matter. Marks and mark–sheet serve a limited purpose. Life is not confined to these only. Life truly means what is the knowledge that you have acquired! Life truly goes on in terms of whether whatever you have learned, you have tried to live that also! Life moves ahead depending upon the condition that whatever the sense of mission you have achieved and whatever is the sense of ambition that you nurture, whether there is any ongoing co–ordination between your sense of mission and your sense of ambition! If you will have faith in these things, then marks will automatically follow you and you will never have to chase marks! It is the knowledge that is going to be of use to you in life, so are skill, self–confidence and determination. You tell me, you must be having a family doctor to whom all the members of your family must be going whenever needed. There would not be a single person in your family who might have asked that family doctor as to how many marks did he score while passing his exam. None could have raised this question. All of you would have thought that as a doctor he was good, you were finding relief in his treatment and thus you started taking his services regularly. When you have to fight a big law suit and you go to a lawyer to engage his services, do you look at the mark–sheet of that lawyer? You only look at his experience, his knowledge, and the graph of his success. And therefore this burden of hankering for marks hinders us sometimes from going in the right direction. But that does not mean that I’m implying that you don’t have to study at all. Studies are definitely useful for testing our own mettle; to know where I stood yesterday and where I stand today. But this also happens sometimes and if you analyse minutely the journey of your own life, you will realise that if you start running after marks, you will look for the shortest ways, and will identify a few selected things and focus on those only. But if something comes from outside those few things you had touched upon; a question comes which is outside the bunch of selected questions that you had prepared; you will be find yourself slipping to the rock bottom. If you have pursuit of knowledge as your focal point, then by itself you try to acquire and attain a lot more. However if you concentrate and focus only on getting marks, then you gradually go on limiting yourself and confine yourself to certain areas for earning more marks. Thus, you may find that despite becoming brilliant in passing the exams, you have sometimes failed in life.

Richa Ji had also mentioned about 'PRATISPARDHA', meaning 'competition with others'. It is a huge psychological battle. In reality, it is not the competition with others that takes us ahead in life but it is competing with ourselves or 'ANUSPARDHA', which takes our life forward. How can tomorrow be made better than yesterday! How can a future occasion be used to improve upon the past results. To make myself instantly clear, I shall cite an example from the field of sports. It is a feature in the life of most of the successful players that they compete with themselves. Let us take the example of Mr. Sachin Tendulkar. He kept on breaking his own records consecutively and consistently for about twenty years, everytime surpassing and outdoing himself and thus continuously forging ahead. What a wonderful journey of life he has had, only because he followed the route of competing with himself rather than competing with others!



Friends, in every field of life and when taking exams, if you were able to study peacefully for two hours earlier, then are you now able to do so for three hours? If you couldn't wake up at the decided time in the morning and were thus delayed, now can you get up early on time? You couldn't sleep earlier due to exam tension, are you able to sleep now? Put yourself to test, and you'll find that a defeat in competition with others results in frustration, disappointment, despair and jealousy, but 'Anuspardha' or 'competition with self' leads to self–analysis and introspection and makes our determination stronger and more resolute. And when we prevail over ourselves, then the motivation to do better becomes innate, you don't need any external sources of energy. That energy is generated from within on its own. If I have to put it in a simple language, then I would say that when you compete with someone else, there are three broad possibilities that arise – first, that you are much better than him; second, that you are much worse than him; and the third that you are equal to him. If you are better than your competitor, then you will become complacent, as you will be filled with over–confidence. If you perform poorly against him, you will become distressed and disappointed, will be filled with envy, that will devour and consume you. And if you are equal to your competitor, then you will never feel the need to improve, life will just go on at its own pace. Therefore, I urge you to engage in 'Anuspardha', or 'competition with self'. You must focus on how to improve upon your past performance and how to perform even better. And you'll witness for yourself the positive change that it will bring about in you.

Acceptance, Mentoring, Sharing Time

Shriman S. Sunder Ji has expressed his feelings on the role of parents. He says that during exams, parents have a vital role to play. He further writes,

> "My mother was not educated. Yet, she would sit by me and ask me to solve problems in Mathematics. She would then compare answers and thus be of great help to me. She would help me rectify errors. My mother did not clear the Class 10 exam, yet without her aid, it would have been impossible for me to pass the CBSE exam."

Sunder Ji, what you say is absolutely correct. And you must have observed today also that women are a majority amongst those who ask me questions or send in suggestions. Mothers who are consciously aware of and actively alert to their children's future, play a big role in assuaging the atmosphere at home. I shall urge parents to lay emphasis on just three points – acceptance, mentoring and sharing time. Accept things as they are. Whatever capabilities you posses, use these to mentor your children, and, howsoever occupied you might be, spare time for them, be with them. Once you learn to accept, maximum number of problems will be solved there and then. Every parent must be experiencing this. Expectation on the part of parents and teachers is the root cause of the problem. Acceptance brings about new avenues in finding solutions to problems. Expectations make the path difficult. Accepting a certain state provides us with the opportunity of opening up newer vistas. Just accept things as they are. You will feel much lighter. We keep deliberating on the heavy weight of our tiny tots' school bags, but there are times when I feel that expectations and aspirations on the part of parents are far too heavier compared to those school bags.

Once, many years ago, one of our acquaintances was admitted to a hospital, following a heart attack. Former M.P. Purushottam Mavlankar, son of India's first Lok Sabha Speaker Ganesh Dada Mavlankar, had come to the hospital to see him. I was present there and I saw that he did not ask a single question on the state of his health; he just sat down with no reference to the ailment or to the situation. He started cracking jokes and lightened the atmosphere in a matter of just a few minutes. In a way, we terrify a patient with constant references to his ailment. I would like to convey to parents that we do exactly the same with our children. Have you ever thought of creating an atmosphere of joy and laughter for children during exams? See it for yourself, the whole ambience will be transformed.

To Cheat is to be Cheap

I have received an incredible phone call. The gentleman does not wish to reveal his name. When you listen to the call, you will come to know why he does not want to identify himself!

> Namaskar, Pradhan Mantriji, I cannot divulge my name because of something that I did in my childhood. Once, when I was young, I had made an attempt to cheat in my exams. And I started preparing most thoroughly for that. I tried to explore and find out various methods of copying and wasted a lot of time because of that. I could have very well secured the same marks by devoting that time to studying, which I wasted while pondering how to copy. Moreover, when I tried to use unfair means to pass the exam, I got caught and a lot of my friends around me also had to undergo distress because of me

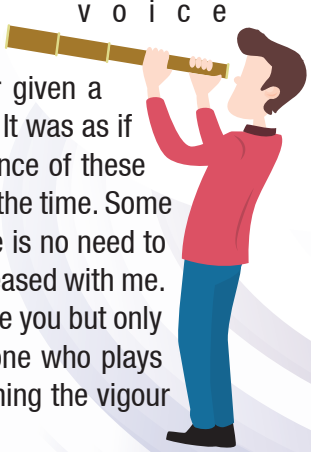
What you say is right. These shortcut ways become the reason for using unfair means. There are times when not having enough confidence in oneself makes one crave to peep into a fellow student's answer sheet, may be just to confirm if one has written the correct answer. Sometimes it happens that our own answer is correct and the other's answer is wrong. But we somehow believe that the other's actually wrong answer is the right one, which leads to our own undoing as well. Thus unfair means lead us nowhere. 'To cheat is to be cheap, so please do not cheat'. Cheating makes you bad, so stay away from it. Time and again you must have heard advisories on staying away from unfair means. I am reiterating the same, once again. Look at the scourge of cheating, copying and such unfair means from any angle and in any form; it is surely going to drag you into the abyss of failure in life. Over and above that, if the invigilator catches you cheating during the exam, you will be utterly ruined. And suppose, you are not caught, even then your own conscience will be burdened for lifetime. When the time will come to counsel your own children, you will not be able to look them clearly in the eye, burdened as you will be with your own sense of guilt. And once you are habituated to using unfair means, you will never feel the desire to actually learn anything in life. Where will you reach then? It is as if you are yourself digging holes in your pathways. And, I have seen that there are people who squander so much of their talent, invest their entire creativity in finding ingenious ways and means in designing unfair methods. If one devotes the same time and the same creativity in addressing issues pertaining to exams, one would never require any unfair means in the first place. Results that you achieve through your own hard work and diligence will invest you with a phenomenal and extra–ordinary self–confidence.

P for Prepare and P for Play

Now listen to this phone call, which I have received: –

> Namaskar, Pradhan Mantri Ji, my name is Monica and since I am a class 12th student, I wanted to ask you a couple of questions regarding the Board Exams. My first question is, what can we do to reduce the stress that builds up during our exams and my second question is, why are exams all about work and no play. Thank you.

During exam days, if I talk about sports and games, your teachers, your parents will be angry with me. "What kind of a Prime Minister is this, who is asking children to come out and play during exams," they might say! People generally nurse the notion that if students indulge in sporting activities, they become careless about their studies. This notion is basically unfounded. It is the root cause of this problem. If one has to achieve holistic development, the fact is that there exists a huge world, a life beyond books; and this precisely is the time to learn living that life also. If someone says, "Let me finish with all exams first, I will play and do other things later"; well, that is impossible. This is THE time for moulding one's life. This is what upbringing is all about. As a matter of fact, in my opinion, three things are crucial – proper rest, the other is the requisite amount of sleep, the third is the body, which is a major component, way beyond mental activity. Other parts of the body too require physical activity. With so much to do, have you ever thought of spending a couple of moments gazing at the sky, looking with wonder at the flora around you, lightening your spirits a bit! You will notice that you will return to your study room and be amongst your books with a renewed freshness. Whatever you are doing, take a break, have a stroll outside, enter the kitchen, look for something that you relish to eat, munch on your favourite biscuit if possible, tell or listen jokes and laugh for a while. If only for five minutes, give yourself a break. You will feel the onset of a certain ease in your work. I do not know if everyone likes this or not, but I am saying it out of personal experience. Deep breathing during these times is very beneficial. It relaxes you. And for deep breathing you do not need to confine yourself to your room. Just be under the open sky, go to the roof top, do deep breathing for five minutes and return to your studies. You will experience relaxation in your body. A relaxed body equally relaxes your mental organs. Some of you feel like studying more and more, keeping awake for late hours in the night. No. Ensure adequate sleep for the body that is required. It will help you avoid wastage of study time; it will enhance your ability to study well. Your concentration will increase. You will feel a certain freshness. Your overall efficiency will rise by leaps and bounds. When I address election rallies, sometimes I suffer from a sore throat or a hoarse voice. Once a folk singer came to meet me. He asked me, "How many hours do you sleep?" I asked him if he was a doctor. He said, "No, but it is linked with your voice problem brought on by delivering so many election speeches. Only when you get adequate sleep, your vocal chords will be able to rest fully." Well, I had never given a thought to a possible connection between my sleep, my speeches and my voice. It was as if he had given me a herbal panacea. Actually, we should understand the importance of these things, it will surely benefit you. But this does not mean that you keep sleeping all the time. Some might remark that since the Prime Minister has said so, just keep sleeping, there is no need to wake up and study. Please, do not do that, else your family members will be displeased with me. And when your mark sheet arrives, if they are not happy with that, they will not see you but only me. So, avoid doing that. And hence I will say, "P for prepare and P for play', one who plays blossoms, the person who plays, shines. This is a wonderful remedy for maintaining the vigour of the mind, brain and body.



Anyway, young friends, you are engrossed in preparing for your exams and here I am, engaging you in matters close to my heart. Of course, it is quite possible that my words this morning will act as a relaxant for you. In the same breath, I will add that do not let these remarks of mine be a burden on you. Do it only if you can. If you cannot do it, please do not do it, else this too will weigh heavily on you. Just as I advise your parents not to be burdensome to you, the same applies to me too. Keeping your resolve in mind, with confidence in yourself, set out for your exams. My best wishes to your. In order to clear a test, treat the test as a festive occasion. You will never feel a test, a test again. Make headway with this Mantra.

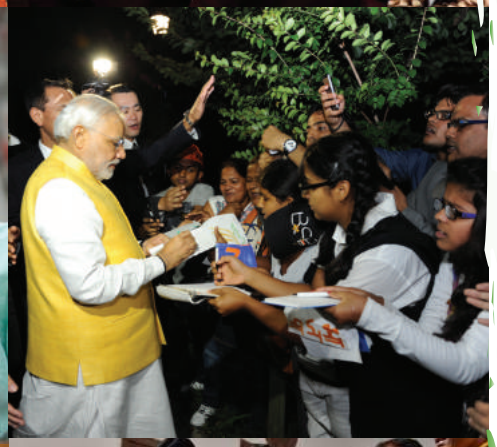
The Nation Honors our Coast Guards

My dear countrymen, on 1st February 2017, Indian Coast Guard is completing 40 years. On this occasion I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the officers and jawans of Coast Guard for their service to the Nation. It is a matter of pride and honour that with its indigenously built 126 ships and 62 aircrafts, it has carved a coveted place for itself amongst the 4 biggest Coast Guards of the world. The motto of Coast Guard is 'Vayam Rakshaamaha.' We protect. True in letter and spirit to the motto, securing the country's maritime borders and maritime environment, the jawans of Coast Guard are relentlessly at work night and day, braving the most adverse conditions. Last year, personnel of Coast Guard undertook a campaign of cleaning up of our coastal areas also, over and above their routine duties. Thousands participated in this campaign. Along with coastal security, they displayed concern towards coastal cleanliness and deserve accolades for their act. Not many people would be aware that in our Coast Guard, not just men, but women too are discharging their duties and responsibilities shoulder to shoulder, and most successfully. Our Coast Guard women officers are pilots, work as Observers, and not just that, they command Hovercrafts as well. In the backdrop of the fact that maritime security today has become an issue of global concern and the excellence displayed by Coast Guard in securing India's coast line, I extend my heartiest felicitations to them on their 40th birthday.

Best wishes on occasion of Vasant Panchami

1st February is the festival of Vasant Panchami. Vasant, that is Spring, is acknowledged as the best of seasons. Vasant is RITURAJ, the king of seasons. In our country, Saraswati Pooja is done on Vasant Panchami; Vasant Panchmi is a major festival. It is considered an occasion to worship Vidya, knowledge. And not just that, it is a celebration of inspiration for brave hearts. 'Mera Rang de Basanti Chola' is a perfect example of that. I extend my best wishes to my countrymen on the pious occasion of Vasant Panchami.

My dear countrymen, in 'Mann Ki Baat', All India Radio too infuses myriad novel hues of creativity and imagination. Last month onwards, they have started broadcasting versions in regional languages, immediately after the broadcast of my 'Mann Ki Baat'. This has gained wide acceptance. People are writing in from far and wide. I felicitate All India Radio for this self–inspired initiative from the core of my heart. 'Mann Ki Baat' gives me a great opportunity to be connected with you. Best wishes to you. Thank you.



Dial **1922** to give suggestions for Mann ki Baat

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